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ABSTRACT

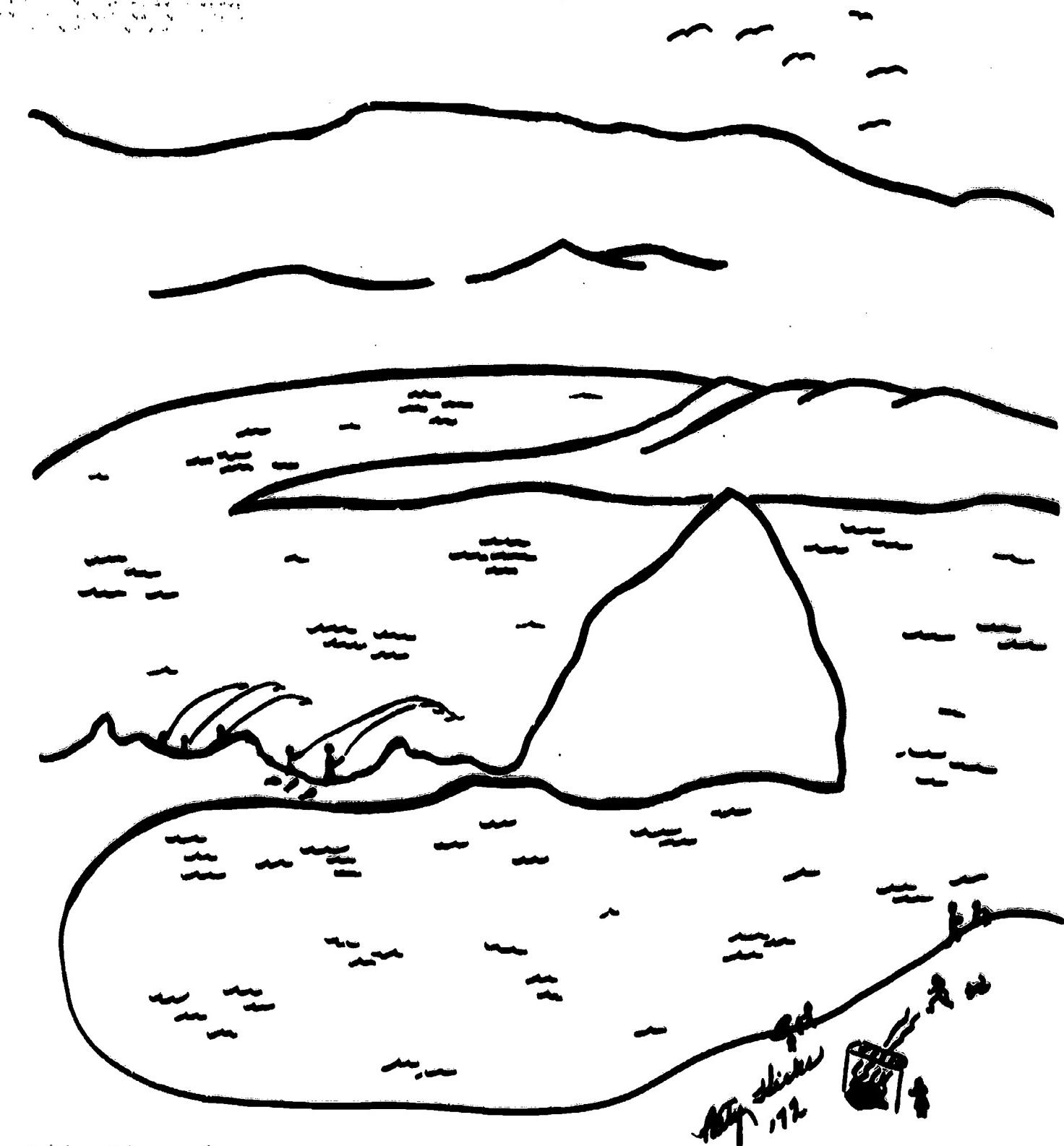
As part of a continuing program designed to provide Nevada's school population with information that will facilitate greater awareness and understanding of past and present Native Nevadan lifestyles and contributions, this curriculum guide might constitute a social studies unit for upper elementary and/or junior high schools. This guide deals with famous Indians of Nevada. It presents: (1) biographical sketches of Captain Truckee (a Northern Paiute and claimed father of Chief Winnemucca, who fought against the Mexicans in California with John C. Fremont); (2) Chief Winnemucca (a Northern Paiute who made many efforts to prevent open conflict with the white man and who was respected by Indians and whites alike); (3) Sarah Winnemucca (daughter of Chief Winnemucca and an educated woman who wrote "Life Among the Paiutes", published in 1883, and gave public lectures on the "outrageous" treatment of Nevada Indians by the Federal Government); and (4) Wovoka (a religious Paiute who urged his people to follow the ways of peace via the Ghost Dance). Other Indian notables mentioned in this guide include Numaga, Johnson Sides, Helen Joaquin, and Natchez. A Nevada map delineating county boundaries and the historical territories of the Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone tribes is also included. (JC)

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# INDIANS OF NEVADA

by

## HELEN DUNN



A publication of  
Nevada Department of Education  
Federal Relations & Programs Branch

Volume 7

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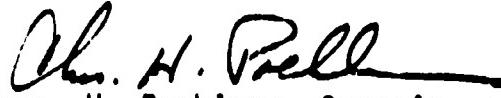
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FOREWORD

The Nevada State Department of Education is pleased to be able to publish this series as part of a continuing program of information on Nevada Indians.

This program is designed to provide Nevada's school population with information in order that they may have a greater awareness and understanding of the lifestyle, past and present, as well as the contributions made by the Native-Nevadans.

No attempt has been made to edit or alter the author's original manuscripts.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chas. H. Poehlman, Consultant  
(Indian Education)

ABOUT

HELEN DUNN

A native of Leadville, Colorado, she came to Goldfield, Nevada, when a baby. There she went through the school system, and graduated from Esmeralda County High School with high honors.

She is a graduate of the University of Nevada, specializing in history and received a B.A. An M.A. degree in Journalism was received from the University of Colorado.

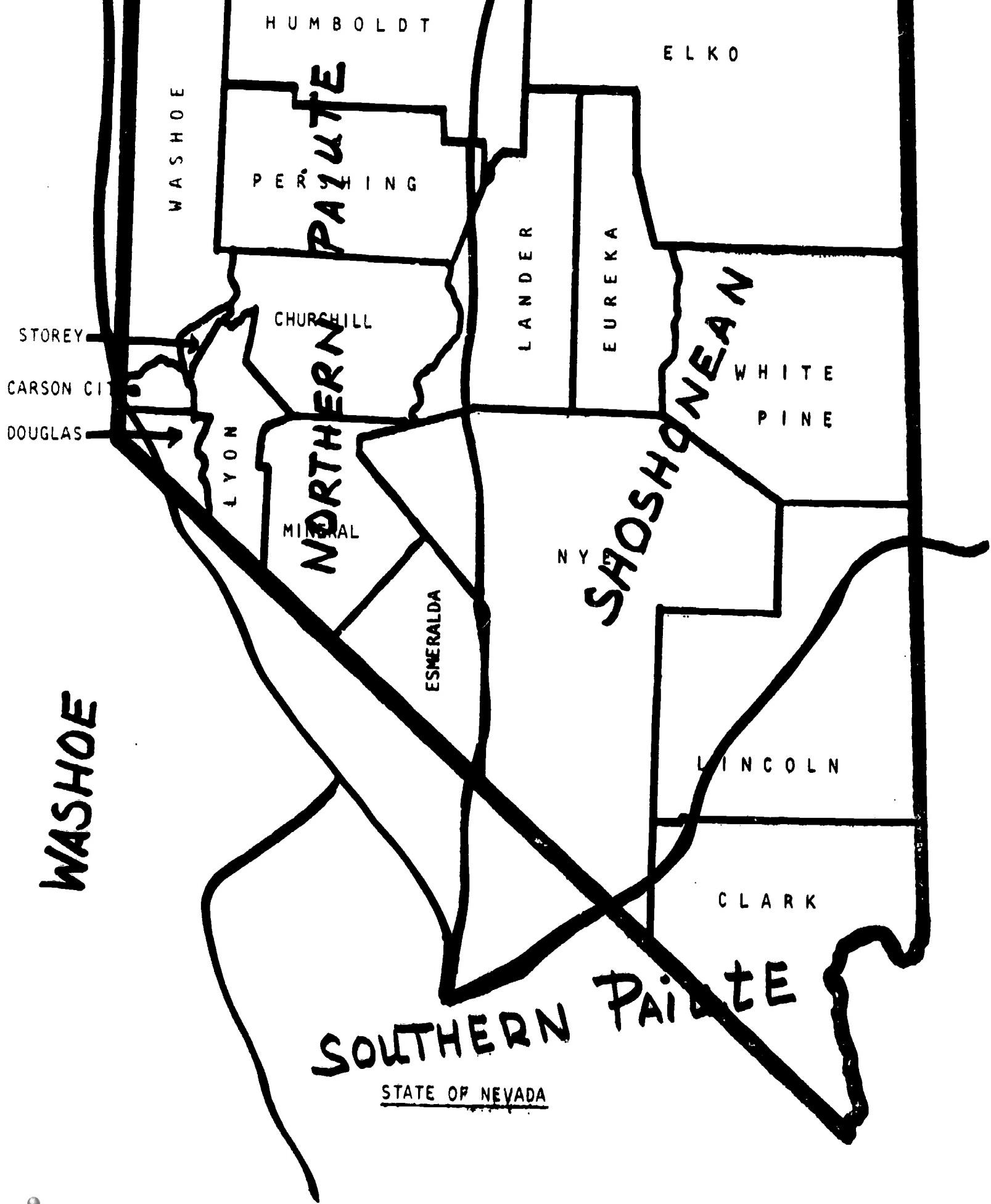
She taught in Goldfield High School and in Reno's Billinghurst Junior High School.

Helen Dunn has long been identified with the study of Nevada. She fostered such a study at Billinghurst where a section of the school's library is known as the Helen M. Dunn Nevada History Library.

She has written several Nevada booklets which will be published by the Nevada State Department of Education.

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VOLUME 7

CONTENTS

Famous Indians of Nevada

Captain Truckee

Chief Winnemucca

Sarah Winnemucca

Picture of Wovoka

Wovoka

Other Indian Notables

\* \* \* \* \*

## FAMOUS INDIANS OF NEVADA

### Captain Truckee

Captain Truckee is claimed to have been the father of Chief Winnemucca. Other sources disclaim this statement. At any rate, Captain Truckee was a famous guide. He first became known in Nevada history in October, 1844, at the site of the Humboldt Sink. Here he became attached to the Stevens-Townshend Murphy emigrant party. One of the party members gave him his name after a French-Canadian scout whom he knew. This name was also applied to the river they followed. Here again is a point of contradiction. Most authorities of history give the credit of the naming of the river to the famous scout, John C. Fremont. (Incidentally, the first name of the river was the Salmon Trout River).

Truckee, who was a chief of the Northern Paiute (Paviotso) Tribe, with a party of twelve men went with Fremont to California and took part in the fighting against the Mexicans. It is further written that he and his brother joined emigrants and accompanied the California Battalion on its march from Monterey to Los Angeles. Later, he returned to the Nevada area where he lived in the Humboldt River region.

His death at Como, which occurred in October, 1860, was attributed to a tarantula bite. He was buried on a mountain ridge of this Lyon County region beneath a pinon tree. In his grave was placed a small Bible given to him by Fremont.

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CHIEF WINNEMUCCA

Accounts tell that Chief Winnemucca was born at the Sink of the Humboldt River. Accounts vary as to his age to the number of wives he had, and just what real relationship he bore to others of the Northern Paiute. Even disagreement exists concerning the meaning of his name. One source says it means "chief". Another says it means "charitable man". Other version says its translation says "one mocassin" and still another "man with a hole in his nose". The latter comes from the fact that some pictures of him with a pierced nasal septum in which he wore a stick or a bone about four inches long.

Winnemucca, whose name is mentioned with the Battles of the Truckee and with the land around Pyramid Lake, had traits of leadership and made many efforts (often overruled by younger leaders) to prevent open conflict with the whites. He and his family were given passes for free rides on the Central Pacific Railroad (now the Southern Pacific), with the use of the coach. The railroad officials found him to be a help, rather than a hindrance, in construction work. In return for his cooperation, he was given gifts and respect. The latter included the name of Winnemucca (which had been called Frenchman's Ford) in his honor. He was honored by soldiers of the United States Army by the presentation to him of a uniform. Pictures of him show him wearing this uniform with a feeling of pride, honor, and respect. Other pictures of Winnemucca show him wearing a feather headdress. Study shows that it was a ceremonial piece associated with Indians of Central California. It is, therefore, presumed it obtained this piece of finery from across the Sierras.

The illness and death of Winnemucca, because of his prominence, rated notice in the "San Francisco Call" of October 15 and October 21, 1882. The story told that the end came to him at Coppersmith Station, with his death attributed to his being bewitched by his young wife. The story further tells that soon after his death his young wife and three-year old child were stoned to death as punishment for causing Winnemucca's death.

## SARAH WINNEMUCCA

Sarah Winnemucca, who was the daughter of Old Chief Winnemucca and whose mother was the daughter of Captain Truckee, in some way had acquired a fair education. She and her father saw that the only hope for the Indians' survival was in cooperation and submission rather than war. She saw, too, that an informed public could help the Indians' situation by bringing pressure upon the Department of Interior to appoint honest Indian agents.

Sarah's life is an interesting one and her book, "Life Among the Paiutes", gives some of the details of information. In it, she indicates that she was born in 1844, although in information she gave the Virginia City "Enterprise", she stated that her birth year was 1848.

Further study of Sarah's life include the fact that she attended school in San Jose, California, as did two of her sisters (Mary and Emma). It is said she married at least three times, each time her husband being a white man. These, it is said were a Mr. Snyder who died while enroute to Germany for a visit; Lt. Bartlett of the United States Army (with whom she lived only a short time); and a man named Hopkins whose name she still used when she had her book, "Life Among the Paiutes", published in 1883.

The meaning of her name varies according to the different historians, but, in her book she gives it as Thocmetony or "shell flower".

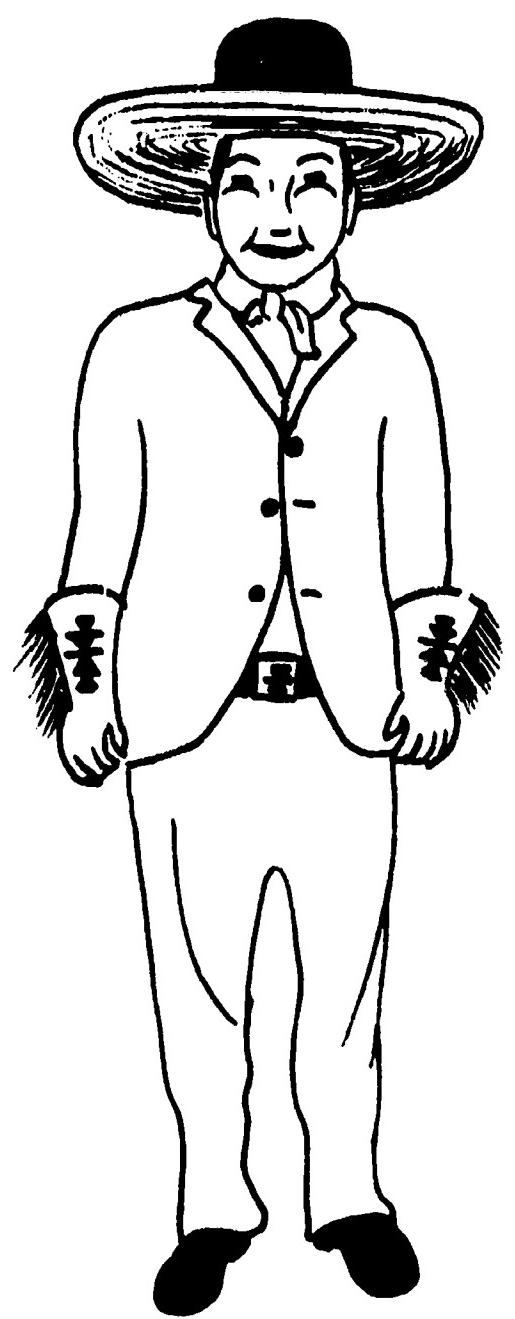
Sometime in the late 1870's, Sarah began to give public lectures on Indian life and on the outrageous treatment of the Nevada Indians by the Federal Government. She visited San Francisco several times for this purpose and had summaries of her talks printed in the 1880's in the newspapers of the day--the "Call", "Alta", and "Union". Gaining fame, she went to the East where she met with such literary figures as Mrs. Horace Mann who helped her get her book printed by a Boston Publisher.

It appears that Sarah, through her book, was able to stir up public opinion and interest. In 1878, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior asked her, her father (Old Winnemucca) and her brother (Natchez) to come to Washington at government expense for an interview. The Washington official, Secretary Schurz, told her to go home and tell her people they would be given canvas for tents and food. This she did, but, according to her book, the government did not fulfill its promise and her people continued in misery and suffering.

6

Her selfless motives, tremendous energy, and high purpose in behalf of her people made her a person admired in the history of the Far West. In history books, she is often pictured in her lecture costume. The description from the "San Francisco Call" of October 18, 1883, says "Her apparel was of dressed deerskin buff-colored and heavily fringed with beads, reaching a little below her knees and displaying her legs encased in red leather leggings and a pair of moccasins trimmed to match her dress. The pendant at her side was a handsomely embroidered pouch. Her black hair, which reached below her waist, was brushed smoothly back from her forehead".

The date and place of Sarah's death are not known (Perhaps files of the Territorial Enterprise would make them available). One of the last pieces of information concerning her appeared in the Virginia City paper of January 14, 1879. In it, it told of a son of hers who was attending a school in Silver City.



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WOVOKA

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Wovoka, the son of a Paiute prophet, is thought to have been born in '358. He is better known in Nevada history as Jack Wilson because he took the name of the white family who had befriended him. His father, who had trained him in the ways of a medicine man or Shaman, died when the boy was 14 years of age. The orphaned boy lived and worked on the David Wilson land on the Walker River near Yerington.

Jack, a handsome Paiute, was a good worker. He became a fast friend and "blood brother" to the oldest Wilson son, Bill. Thus, Jack was welcomed at meals and family prayers. He became very interested with the Christian religion and tried to use its teachings in a new religion which he hoped would offer hope to the Indian people.

Wovoka wanted to give his people a feeling of faith in themselves. He urged them to follow the ways of peace. One of the ways he worked for this was by the Ghost Dance. Saying that the dance had come to him in his dream, he taught it to his people in the Nevada region. From there, it spread to other parts of North America.

The Federal Government, alarmed at the popularity of his Ghost Dance, stamped out this new faith.

As he grew older, Wovoka withdrew from both whites and his Indian friends. He felt his mission failed, and he became disillusioned.

At the time of his death, the newspapers failed to mention it. Thus, departed a great Indian leader of North America.

### OTHER INDIAN NOTABLES

Mention must be made of some other Indians mentioned in the history of Nevada. While information on their life's story is somewhat limited, these facts might prove of interest.

Numaga, better known as Young Winnemucca, was a great leader and attempted to keep peace with the whites. It is to be remembered that, despite the name, he was not son of the old chief.

Johnson Sides, who had been taken in by the Sides family (thus his name). He lived on their ranch and, in addition to his work, studied and learned to speak English and French. He also spoke several Indian dialects. He was employed by the United States Army as a peacemaker. In his duties, he wore an army uniform and an army field hat. For his work, he was given a medal of which he was very proud.

Helen Joaquin who through an interpreter gave much needed information concerning the Paiutes of the Honey Lake region.

Natchez was the brother of Sarah Winnemucca and like his sister he worked for a better life for his people.